

# Department of Human Services

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## Kids' agony costs Holland parental rights

**BY JACK KRESNAK**  
 FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

*December 19, 2006*

LANSING -- The four siblings of Ricky Holland, the former foster child murdered by Tim and Lisa Holland in 2005, were traumatized by Ricky's death and the destruction of their family, a state social worker told an Ingham County Family Court judge on Monday.

The children -- boys ages 4 and 3 and girls 4 and 2 -- will require therapy for the foreseeable future "due to the amount of emotional issues the children have experienced," testified Robert Payne, a foster care worker for the Ingham County Department of Human Services.

"There is no end in sight at this time," Payne said of the DHS-funded therapy the children are getting twice a week.

Payne testified during a trial Monday before Judge Janelle Lawless, who then terminated Lisa Holland's parental rights to Ricky's four siblings. Earlier in the day, Tim Holland voluntarily surrendered his rights.

Lisa Holland, who will turn 34 this week, was convicted by a jury of first-degree murder and first-degree child abuse in the death of 7-year-old Ricky and is serving a life sentence with no chance of parole. Tim Holland, 37, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, testified against his wife and was sentenced to 30-60 years in prison. The Hollands adopted Ricky after taking him in as a foster child.

Payne told the judge that the four Holland children are angry that they do not live with their parents and still grieve for Ricky, who died in the family's home outside Williamston.

"They experienced or saw a great deal of physical and emotional abuse in the home," Payne said, although Lawless struck the statement from the record because of an objection from Lisa Holland's attorney, Michael Nichols.

Nichols' arguments to not terminate Lisa Holland's parental rights were that the children should still know that their mother cares for them and that, if she wins an appeal of her convictions, she possibly could provide them a home someday.

Nichols gave Lawless a transcript of a portion of a statement Lisa Holland gave Ingham County sheriff's deputies on Jan. 26 in which she repeatedly expressed concern about the children's welfare and caretakers.

But, Lawless said, "The children not only need but they deserve to have a safe, proper and loving home. Miss Holland clearly cannot provide that."

The judge said there is a bond between Lisa and the children, but not necessarily a healthy one, and the children should not have to wait too long for a permanent home.

The children, who are being cared for by two paternal aunts, are in the legal custody of the Michigan Children's Institute, a division of the DHS, awaiting adoption planning and approval. No adoption is yet pending.

Tim Holland spent several moments in court trying to make eye contact with his wife, who seemed to ignore him.

They sat with their attorneys at separate tables on the same side of Lawless' courtroom. Both wore dark blue prison coveralls with orange shoulder patches and stripes on the legs.

Tim Holland admitted to five allegations in the 43-count DHS petition asking the judge to terminate the Hollands' rights to the children.

Lawless then ordered Lisa Holland, her attorneys and any spectators to leave the courtroom if they had not been invited by Tim Holland to stay as he relinquished his parental rights.



Tim and Lisa Holland were convicted of murdering Ricky Holland. A judge revoked Lisa's rights to Ricky's four siblings. Tim gave up his parental rights.

Lisa Holland was taken to a small cell outside the courtroom while Tim Holland read a three-page statement.

At Holland's request afterward, his attorney Sam Reedy gave the statement to the Free Press. It said Holland was grateful to his family "for taking my children in and raising them to be the fine young men and women they are destined to be."

"I only hope and pray that after my children become adults I can explain to them why their big brother is in heaven and I was not a part of their lives," the statement said.

"In closing, I only ask this: 'Why, Lisa, why?' "

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Published December 19, 2006

## Hollands no longer have rights to children

Judge: Ricky's slaying left siblings traumatized

By Christine Rook  
Lansing State Journal

### Onlinextra

- For past coverage of the Ricky Holland case, go to [www.lsj.com](http://www.lsj.com).

Ricky Holland's siblings have edged toward a more certain future.

After hearing testimony about the trauma undergone by the children, an Ingham County judge Monday terminated any parental claim Lisa and Tim Holland have on their four surviving children, ages 2 to almost 5.

State workers now can begin the search for an adoptive family.

Tim Holland, 37, who pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in 7-year-old Ricky's death, voluntarily gave up his rights as a father Monday. His wife, Lisa, 33, convicted of first-degree murder in the boy's slaying, is fighting the judge's decision against her and plans to appeal.

Tim Holland won't get out of prison until his remaining kids are in their 30s or older. Lisa Holland has been sentenced to life in prison but is appealing her conviction.

"These children need and deserve permanence and a safe and loving home," Ingham County Circuit Judge Janelle Lawless said in her afternoon decision.

She gave a variety of reasons for stripping Lisa Holland of her rights, including the emotional trauma Holland's homicidal act must have had on Ricky's siblings and the fact Lisa Holland couldn't possibly provide a warm and loving home long distance from her cell.

During Monday's hearing, a state social worker told Lawless that Ricky's siblings have been traumatized by his death and the destruction of their family.

The children will require therapy for the foreseeable future "due to the amount of emotional issues the children have experienced," testified Robert Payne, a foster care worker for the Ingham County Department of Human Services.

"There is no end in sight at this time," Payne said of the DHS-funded therapy the children are getting twice a week.

Payne told the judge the four Holland children are angry that they do not live with their parents and still grieve for Ricky, who died in the family's home outside Williamston.

"They experienced or saw a great deal of physical and emotional abuse in the home," Payne said,

although Lawless struck the statement from the record because of an objection from Lisa Holland's attorney, Michael Nichols.

Nichols' arguments to not terminate Lisa Holland's parental rights were the children should still know that their mother cares for them and that, if she wins an appeal of her convictions, she possibly could provide them a home someday.

As of Dec. 14, the children were in state custody and temporarily placed with Tim Holland's relatives. It's possible they could permanently be placed there, officials said, but it's not a given.

The three oldest children are Ricky's biological brothers and sister. They and Ricky were adopted by the Hollands, who had a child of their own. So the older kids are no strangers to the adoption process, which can be a long one.

An appeal by Lisa Holland on the parental rights decision could take a year to move through Michigan's maze of courts. She is simultaneously appealing her October criminal conviction.

"Lisa's hope and belief is in her appeal of the criminal case," her co-counsel Andrew Abood said outside the courtroom Monday.

The children, though, likely won't have to wait out the appeals process to be placed in what could become their adoptive home.

The state Department of Human Services can begin identifying interested and qualified families now.

Once a family is found, officials said, a petition for adoption can be filed and the children placed in the chosen "pre-adoptive" home.

Typically, state workers try to keep siblings together; so workers might need to find a family willing to take on the parenting of four young kids.

"It's a challenge," said Bill Johnson, superintendent of DHS' Michigan Children's Institute.

A final transfer of permanent custody must wait until all of Lisa Holland's appeals are exhausted.

The sooner the better, officials said.

"It can be much more reassuring to kids," Johnson said, "if they know what is going to happen to them."

During Monday's court appearance, Tim Holland read a three-page statement. It said he was grateful to his family "for taking my children in and raising them to be the fine young men and women they are destined to be."

"I only hope and pray that after my children become adults I can explain to them why their big brother is in heaven and I was not a part of their lives," the statement said.

"In closing, I only ask this: 'Why, Lisa, why?' "

Detroit Free Press staff writer Jack Kresnak contributed to this report. Contact Christine Rook at 377-1261 or [clrook@lsj.com](mailto:clrook@lsj.com).



## Therapist knows how the system failed Ricky Holland

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

Forget my theories, if you like.

Susan Honeck knows a thousand times more than me about how Jackson County's child protective system botched Ricky Holland's case.

Honeck, a Jackson social worker, was once Ricky's therapist. She knew he was abused years before the rest of the world.

When Ricky was 4, Honeck saw rope burns on his wrist. He said the burns happened when he was tied to his bed with a dog leash.

Honeck filed a child-abuse report that was dismissed by the state Department of Human Services office in Jackson.

Four years later, Ricky was murdered by his adoptive parents, Lisa and Tim Holland.

DHS now admits Honeck's report was not investigated well enough. Caseworkers thought highly of the Hollands and trusted them. The investigator never talked to Honeck.

Honeck contacted reform-minded state lawmakers last week to express her view -- based on DHS investigative transcripts read to her by police -- of "foul-ups" in Ricky's case.

"This Child Protective Services investigator was an abusive parent's best ally," she wrote.

"He not only made excuses for the parent, he also planted his idea of what happened into the 4-year-old's mind, so that Ricky would substantiate that the marks were from 'rough play.'

"I'm old enough to recall the McMartin preschool fiasco in California, where people planted ideas in the young children's minds, then retrieved them as 'fact.' Ricky's case was the opposite. Instead of planting 'memories of abuse,' (the investigator) planted excuses for the abuse.

"The CPS worker may have been overloaded with cases at the time, but the truth is that he did a botched interview with Ricky, using Lisa Holland's excuses for the injury on his wrist. He may have been under-trained, or just of the opinion that Lisa Holland was a wonderful mother, as the foster care worker believed.

"I Don't let the DHS put the blame on being overloaded. A true professional will admit when they cannot do the job properly. If you keep doing it anyway, kids die. This was a problem of interviewing, and prejudice in thinking Lisa Holland was not a psychopath.

"My trust in the Child Protective Services system is so lost, if I ever had another child like Ricky Holland in therapy, I would file the 3200 report (of abuse) as the law says I must. Then I would get in my car and drive out to the Michigan State Police Post in Jackson to make sure a detective is aware of the situation. I would not leave until the report is made.

"I wish you well in your investigation and I am hoping it results in effective changes in a very sick system."

Good luck, lawmakers. This will be tough.

Published December 19, 2006  
[ From Lansing State Journal ]

Tuesday's letters to the editor

## **Let Ricky go**

It has now been 1 1/2 years since poor little Ricky Holland was murdered by his parents. Your paper has done an exceptionally good job of bringing the facts out about the case from start to finish.

The time has come to let this little boy rest in peace. No one is going to forget about him, but your paper

keeps his photo and all the facts about the case in your paper every day.

We will always remember this sad, sad story, but the time has come to let go. Please.

Ron Losen  
Lansing

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## **Help protect kids**

Fifty-two deaths out of the thousands and thousands of reported child abuse and neglect cases annually is terrible.

The defined caseload for a Children's Protective Services worker is 20. I doubt the Michigan CPS caseload meets that standard.

CPS workers should have better training in: investigation skills; early childhood development; interviewing children; assessing parental skills and abilities; working with teachers regarding child development, skills and abilities; general interviewing skills; assessing cases that require police intervention; testifying in court, social work and other skills.

Once cases are assessed, hopefully the community provides the necessary resources to refer the cases to for treatment. CPS responsibilities don't just rest on the CPS workers' shoulders. They belong to the community.

Julia Luttrell  
Lansing





## Case against Hamptons tossed

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A Jackson couple whose baby died in August 2005 -- allegedly without proper medical care -- will not face child-rearing controls by state social workers.

Jackson County Probate Judge Susan Vandercook on Monday dismissed an abuse-and-neglect case against Lee and Melinda Hampton.

"It has been almost a year and a half since the baby died, and they have taken good care of their children," Vandercook said.

She said state Department of Human Services never removed the other children from the home, nor did social workers petition to remove them since Lee II died on Aug. 27, 2005. He was 5 months old.

In essence, Vandercook ruled the time to act was then, not now. Even Monday, the judge was not sure what Human Services was seeking.

"They did not ask to remove the remaining children," Vandercook said.

Court documents indicate the Protective Services petition, filed July 3, 2006, was mandatory. The petition does not allege the surviving three children have been neglected or abused.

Jackson County prosecutors continue to investigate the Hamptons and are considering whether to file criminal charges. They contend the Hamptons failed to seek medical care as Lee II suffered first with a herniated navel and then cirrhosis of the liver.

The Hamptons are members of the Church of God, 140 W. South St. The Rev. Frank Hampton, Lee's father, has said the church advocates divine healing, but leaves medical decisions to individuals.

Records show the couple took Lee II to a doctor for check-ups at 1 month and 2 months. A Jackson doctor said he "discharged" the Hamptons from his practice when they refused to allow a surgeon to examine the baby's protruding hernia.

An informant warned the Department of Human Services five weeks before Lee II died that the boy appeared "green and dying."

A Protective Services worker went to the Hampton house on July 20, and was turned away by the father without seeing the child.

Court documents indicate Hampton said he did not want to wake the boy, and that he would take his son to the agency when he woke up. Hampton did not follow through, and neither did the state agency.

Hampton, director of multicultural relations at Jackson Community College, declined comment Monday.

Protective Services did not push to see the sick child, nor did it act to remove the remaining children, even though Jackson police initially considered the death suspicious.

Surviving children ordinarily are placed in protective custody until the investigation clears the parents, prosecutors have said.

A DHS spokesman said Monday there was not an internal investigation of the Hampton case, but it is likely the Jackson County office "looked at" how it was handled.

The Hamptons took their dead son to Foote Hospital on Aug. 27, 2005. Prosecutors allege the boy suffered for several weeks without medical care and died bloated with nearly three quarts of fluid in his abdomen.

The official cause of death was cirrhosis of the liver. Whether he could have survived with medical attention, including a liver transplant, is unknown.

A child-protection team that reviewed the case concluded, at the very least, "medical attention could have prevented Lee II from suffering due to the enormous buildup in his abdomen."

Vandercook said there was no imperative for the government to intervene now. "The kids are doing fine," she said.

Their surviving children are 6 years, 5 years and 8 months old.

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Article published Dec 19, 2006

Dheel receives prison term for infant's death

Man admitted he suffocated his infant son

By DANIELLE QUISENBERRY  
Times Herald

Savannah Kettlewell told a judge Monday that Michael Dheel deserved five years in prison, because he refused for months to tell the truth about his role in the 2005 death of their infant son.

"For 14 months he lied," Kettlewell told St. Clair County Circuit Judge Daniel Kelly. "Mike will come home again. My son will never come home again."

Kelly listened to Kettlewell, 23, of Macomb Township, then sentenced Dheel to 5 to 22 1/2 years in prison - a minimum 2 1/2 years more than recommended by state sentencing guidelines.

Dheel pleaded guilty Nov. 21 to involuntary manslaughter and being a habitual offender. He admitted to suffocating his 3 1/2-month-old son, Michael Ray Kettlewell, with a pacifier in September 2005.

Michael died of asphyxiation inside an apartment Dheel shared with Kettlewell on Electric Avenue in Port Huron.

At least twice after Dheel realized the baby had lost consciousness, he did not call for help, he admitted during the November plea hearing.

Kettlewell said she did not think Dheel intentionally killed the baby. But, she said, he failed to help his son and did not tell police the truth about what happened.

Dheel told many conflicting stories in hours of interviews after the baby's death, police have said. It took many months to build a case against him.

Kelly asked Dheel twice during Monday's sentencing if he wanted to comment. Dheel refused both times.

"Your silence today doesn't impact me. It's your silence for 14 months," Kelly said. "You were more concerned about self-preservation than putting to ease the mind of this child's mother."

Sentencing Dheel to 2 1/2 years in prison would be a "slap on the hand," Kettlewell said before Kelly issued the sentence.

"My children have a brother they will never know," she said.

Dheel's family and friends, some of them visibly upset, sat behind Kettlewell during the sentencing.

"Now, my brother has to deal with this on top of grieving," said Dheel's sister, Andrea Dheel.

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## Column: Children's ombudsman struggles with image problem

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

By Sharon Emery

Way back in 1994, when the Office of Children's Ombudsman was just a twinkle in lawmakers' eyes, the idea was to create an agency to investigate complaints about how the state handled certain child abuse and neglect cases.

Lawmakers planned to create the office in the bipartisan Legislative Council, ensuring oversight by the legislative branch.

In the end, however, the ombudsman's office was placed under the Department of Management and Budget, in the Executive Office. Word was that Republican Gov. John Engler wanted it that way.

Over the course of Engler's next eight years in office, Democrats and others intermittently complained that there was no way the ombudsman's office could independently investigate another agency -- now called the Department of Human Services -- that was also overseen by the executive branch. The fox-guarding-the-hen-house adage was invoked.

Flash forward 12 years and we're having the same debate, this time with the political tables turned: GOP lawmakers are making the charge against the ombudsman's office under Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

The outgoing Legislature has passed a measure to put the office under lawmakers' oversight. Opposing Democrats call it a "political bill." Granholm's spokeswoman says the legislation is unnecessary and that the governor doesn't support it. That sounds like a veto to me.

The issue has been earnestly pursued by the House Special Committee on Child Protection, led by Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township. As he says, "Even the appearance that an investigation is not transparent and independent is harmful to the system."

While that focus on appearances may have seemed extreme pre-Ricky Holland, now that the case involving the death of the 7-year-old Williamston boy is complete, there's evidence of collateral damage.

As Children's Ombudsman Verlie Ruffin admitted to the House Family and Children Services Committee earlier this month, the Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO) has some image problems.

"We really want to address the public confidence issue," Ruffin told lawmakers.

Little wonder. While the OCO report on the Holland case was done in early May, the exchange of findings and responses between the ombudsman's office and the Department of Human Services extended long into the fall, even though the inter-agency agreement between the two specifies 60 days.

It wasn't until Dec. 8 that the OCO released its closing letter, which listed its findings and recommendations in the Holland case, as well as DHS' response. That happened to be the same day DHS released the findings of its own internal investigation.

While the OCO withheld public release of the report at the request of the Ingham County prosecutor, who was trying Ricky's parents for the boy's murder, the delay in inter-agency communications was unusual.

DHS took nearly five months -- instead of two -- to respond to the OCO's closing letter in the case, even though its response was supposed to detail steps the department would take to improve the child protection system. It seems that should have been a more urgent concern.

Scenarios like that feed the rumor mill, so conspiracy theorists are working overtime on this one, noting the delay coincided with the height of the governor's re-election campaign. And indeed Ricky's death was a talking point for GOP gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos, as well as the Michigan Republican Party.

Call it fact or call it fiction, either way it's a costly distraction. So let's be done with this tug-of-war regarding who oversees the ombudsman's office.

There's no way of knowing whether legislative oversight will solve the perceived problem of political influence. But the state can no longer afford to let that perception divert us from the real problems involved in making sure abused and neglected kids don't end up dead.

Contact Sharon Emery at (517) 487-8888 x236 or e-mail her at [semery@boothnewspapers.com](mailto:semery@boothnewspapers.com).

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December 19, 2006

**A child is waiting**

## A loving family would be 9-year-old's best gift

**Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News**

A white tiger is the new addition to Vincent's collection of stuffed animals. Vincent keeps him close. He talks to it. He sometimes prefers that it "answer" for him.

The 9-year-old, a victim of severe physical abuse, at times feels more comfortable letting the animals ("I have six," he says) talk for him.

For instance, Vincent prompts his tiger to describe himself: "Sometimes his behavior is a little bad, but sometimes it's a Level 2."

And, says the tiger, "He (Vincent) does his chores, cleans his room, takes his shower, and he gets to open his presents."

Vincent's adoption worker at the therapeutic residence where the child has made "tremendous progress," notes that Vincent has missed much early schooling, but "enjoys learning. He's an inquisitive child. He enjoys all sports."

Smiling, Vincent adds, "And I like to do puzzles and play games."

His cottage caseworker reports, "Vincent does well in school (special education for cognitively impaired students). He gets a special lunch prize every week and doesn't get timeouts.

"He's also helpful. He's real caring."

Says his adoption worker, "Vincent needs a very patient family who would respond to him in a calm manner."

Might you consider adoption? Please talk with Carol Wade at Methodist Children's Home, (313) 531-9948.

**Last column's child:** Da'Shawn, 12, is a "nice kid" who enjoys playing sports and being active.

For information, call Rebecca Whitton at the Christ Child House, (313) 584-6077, ext. 18.

*A Child is Waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.*

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## China Bars Overweight Parents From Adopting

POSTED: 11:09 am EST December 19, 2006

**BEIJING** -- China is tightening rules on foreign adoptions, barring parents who are unmarried, over 50 or obese, but said it will try to increase the number of children available to those who qualify, according to U.S. adoption agencies.

The move comes amid a surge in foreign applications to adopt Chinese children. The United States is the No. 1 destination for children adopted abroad, but the number going to Europe and elsewhere is rising.

The restrictions are meant to limit adoptions to "only the most qualified families," said the Web site of one agency, Harrah's Adoption International Mission in Spring, Texas.

An employee of the government-run China Center of Adoption Affairs, the agency that oversees foreign adoptions, said it has issued new guidelines but refused to confirm the details released by the American agencies. He wouldn't give his name.

A U.S. Embassy spokesman in Beijing said it was looking into reports of the new regulations. He spoke on condition of anonymity in line with embassy rules.

The Chinese agency also is trying to increase the number of children available by creating a new charity to improve conditions in orphanages and "keep infants and young children alive and well enough to be adopted," Harrah's said.

Americans adopted 7,906 children from China in 2005, raising the total since 1989 to 48,504, according to the Joint Council on International Children's Services in Alexandria, Va., an association of adoption agencies and parents' groups. The group's Web site lists 110 U.S. groups that arrange adoptions from China.

Under the new rules, only people who have been married for at least two years will be eligible to adopt, according to Harrah's, the New Beginnings Family and Children's Services Inc. of Mineola, N.Y., and Families Thru International Adoption Inc. of Evansville, Ind.

Beijing previously allowed adoptions by unmarried foreigners.

The agencies said Chinese officials disclosed the rules at a Dec. 8 meeting in Beijing. They take effect May 1.

Among other restrictions, couples must have a Body Mass Index -- a measure of obesity -- of no more than 40 and be aged 30 to 50, with people up to age 55 considered for children with special needs, according to the agencies.

The rules bar parents who take medication for psychiatric conditions including depression and anxiety or have "severe facial deformity."

Many Chinese children adopted abroad are girls who are given up by couples who, bound by rules that limit most urban families to one child, want to try for a son. Others are left at orphanages or by the roadside by unmarried mothers or poor families.

A sharp increase in foreign applications for adoption has led to a backlog in approvals, with waiting times rising from six months in early 2005 to as much as 15 months now, according to adoption agencies.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Funds designated for low-cost housing

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

By Kathy Jessup

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For two years it was little more than a symbolic line item in the city of Kalamazoo's financial statements.

But on Monday, \$250,000 earmarked in 2004 as ``challenge money" for establishing a publicly funded, affordable-housing trust fund was released by the Kalamazoo City Commission.

It will be added to at least another \$250,000 recently appropriated by the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners to help fund a housing-voucher program and potentially some bricks-and-mortar development to get the community's homeless off the streets and into homes.

David Anderson, chairman of the Kalamazoo County Public Housing Commission and a Kalamazoo city commissioner, said that under tentative plans, qualifying, low-income people could be offered rental vouchers for up to two years. In exchange for the assistance, recipients would be required to address barriers to being able to afford housing, such as substance-abuse problems or the lack of a high school diploma.

The Kalamazoo City Commission was lauded at its meeting Monday for providing the vision and initial financial commitment for an affordable-housing initiative. Several commissioners said, however, that homelessness is not just a Kalamazoo problem.

``It's not just the city's burden, and I love reminding folks of that," Vice Mayor Bobby Hopewell said. ``We're asked to take care of everybody who comes within these bounds."

Commissioner Don Cooney called on ``neighboring communities to step forward."

``This is a tremendously important night for our community, because we're putting the problem front and center and saying we want to do something about this," he said.

``We know there is another \$250,000 out there on the table," Cooney said of the county's funding commitment. ``It shouldn't only be the city of Kalamazoo's to match. Not all of our homeless are from Kalamazoo."

Commissioners said they don't have an additional \$250,000 in the 2007 budget to match the county's offer of up to \$500,000 for the housing initiative. But they didn't close the door on offering some additional funding in 2008 or beyond.

Mayor Hannah McKinney credited departing county board Chairman Bob Brink for ``moving this issue on the county's agenda" and advocacy groups like the Kalamazoo Homeless Action Network for raising public awareness about the demand for low-cost housing.

The city/county initiative also has received financial backing from the state. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority last week announced grants totaling \$1.45 million aimed at facets of the area's low-cost-housing dilemma.

Officials have not said when the first housing vouchers may become available.





## Mel Trotter puts needed food on holiday tables

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

By Ron Cammel

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- After a doctor said she should not work, Gloria Huey is waiting for Social Security benefits but drawing no income during the holidays.

On Monday, she went to Mel Trotter Ministries to pick up food for a Christmas meal for her daughter, granddaughter and herself.

"If it wasn't for Mel Trotter, we wouldn't be able to have Christmas this year," Huey said.

"I'm very grateful for them."

She was not the only one. About 350 families received help from the downtown ministry in its second major food giveaway of the year.

People collected frozen turkeys, potatoes, vegetables, pies, juice, bread and snack items from tables in a long hallway, assisted by volunteers from Mel Trotter's residence program.

"I just like helping out," said Terry Edwards, as he pushed bottles of Old Orchard juice to the front of a table.

Doug Redford, director of development, said this year's need seems to be the same as the past several years.

But people seem to be primarily underemployed, rather than unemployed, as in the past, he said.

"The need is pretty static .... It's just the types of people have changed," he said. "That's the feel we get from talking to them.

"It's no easier for those who come," he said.

"It's a season in their life when they've gotten a little bit sideways."

The all-day event included a chance for "spiritual assessment" in the chapel.

Volunteers at 10 stations asked recipients if they needed prayer or help in finding a home church.

Maria Sanroman, with two young children, left with a Spanish New Testament tucked in her package of food.

"I'm grateful for this opportunity to us," she said.

The ministry drew 650 families to an annual giveaway before Thanksgiving.

In addition to a live-in program for 225 people, a year-round pantry sees 500 families a month. Food recipients register through ACCESS, a network of churches, or at Mel Trotter.

Businesses and organizations donated food for Monday's event.

"We just don't believe anyone should sit down to an empty Christmas table," Redford said.

"We want people to experience the joy and what the season's really about."

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Roberts AFC files for hearing, says: Charges unfounded

By James Martinez, Staff Writer

LANSING - The owner of Roberts Gentle Care Adult Foster Care Home has filed for a hearing to challenge the suspension of its license last week by the Department of Human Services (DHS).

"We've filed a request for a formal hearing. We believe most if not all of the allegations are unfounded," said Elliot Blumberg, the attorney for owner Phyllis Roberts. "It's our perception that the complainants were some former Hospice employees who were fired for not doing their job."

Blumberg acknowledged he does not know the who filed the complaint leading to the investigation. He also said Roberts has not been cited for anything like this incident in the past.

According to Blumberg, he filed the request with the DHS's Office of Children and Adult Licensing (OCAL), who suspended Roberts' license and issued a notice of intent to revoke the license on Dec. 9. Actions by the OCAL followed a Dec. 6 complaint investigation that revealed several alleged violations of the Adult Foster Care Facility Licensing Act and family home rules. A Dec. 11 press release, from the DHS, stated the offenses included "licensee suitability, restricting the movement of a resident by binding or tying, resident nutrition and rules regarding the altering, administration and storage of resident medication."

As stated in the release, effective Dec. 9 at 9 a.m., Roberts could not accept foster care patients and was required to notify all guardians of the adults in her care that the license is suspended and she cannot provide foster care. Roberts was licensed to care for six adults and to operate an adult foster care home since Oct. 27, 1999, stated the release.

In compliance with the suspension, Blumberg said the five adult patients, ranging in age from about 92 to 103, were removed Saturday morning.

"The family members are just outraged, they don't want (the adults) moved from there ... They wanted their loved ones to be there," said Blumberg, who intends to contact the families to see if they will testify for the hearing, but would not share those names with the Herald Times. Earlier in the week, Roberts directed all questions regarding the issue to Blumberg.

Maureen Sorbet, Deputy Director of DHS Office of Communications, previously declined to discuss the specific details of the complaint investigation, but confirmed Roberts had filed for a hearing. She explained the hearing is the next step in the process and not out of the ordinary. According to Sorbet, the hearing will be scheduled within 30 days before an administrative law judge, who after hearing from the state and foster care provider has 60 days to render a decision. The attorneys can then file a brief and the issue goes before DHS Director Marianne Udow. An appeal of Udow's decision can then be appealed in circuit court, explained Sorbet.

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**December 19, 2006**

## **Bloomberg Plans New Office to Help New York's Poor**

By **DIANE CARDWELL**

The city is planning to spend an extra \$150 million a year in public and private money on the core priority of Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)'s second term: combating poverty that is hidden beneath New York's vast wealth.

The effort would involve the creation of a new city office that would operate in part like a philanthropic foundation and in part like a venture capital company. The program, called the Center for Economic Opportunity, would administer a \$100 million fund to support experimental programs, like giving cash rewards to encourage poor people to stay in school or receive preventive medical care, or matching their monthly bank deposits to foster greater savings.

The office would also oversee a program giving tax credits to impoverished families to offset child care costs. Programs are to be constantly evaluated, and those that cannot show success will be terminated. The administration has hired Veronica M. White, a business planning and management consultant who has worked in housing development.

The effort is classic Bloomberg in that it emphasizes nontraditional solutions and enlists the private sector to tackle problems that have historically vexed governments. Mr. Bloomberg has turned to fellow philanthropists to help improve the schools, to finance [a Republican](#) national convention in New York and now to build a ground zero memorial. But yesterday's announcement represents the fruit of his efforts to fight poverty in his second and last term as mayor.

"When you do things with public money, you really are required to do things that have some proven track record and to focus on more conventional approaches," Mr. Bloomberg said in making the announcement at a credit union on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. "But conventional approaches, as we know, have kept us in this vicious cycle of too many people not being able to work themselves out of poverty even though they're doing everything that we've asked them to do."

The administration's efforts would place an emphasis on rewarding good behavior and promoting self-sufficiency. Officials plan to spend \$42 million annually on the tax credit, \$25 million to reward actions like attending schools or prenatal education classes, and \$11 million to help poor adults save money and learn sound financial practices.

The new plan calls for the office to spend \$5 million a year on measuring progress, and \$71 million on about 30 programs that administration officials say they are developing but declined to announce.

In an approach that has become a hallmark of the Bloomberg administration, the new office is intended to work across all agencies. But the center could also serve as a way of continuing Mr. Bloomberg's agenda after his term ends.

This year, he charged a high-profile panel drawn from business, nonprofit and philanthropic circles with devising solutions to fighting poverty that did not cost additional money. But after the panel released its recommendations in September, officials in the administration were able to make the case that creating the new office would help build both the internal institutions and external

demand that would allow it to survive a new administration.

The child care tax credit proposal, which needs state approval, is working its way through the legislative process, said Linda I. Gibbs, the deputy mayor overseeing the antipoverty effort. And officials have begun raising money to pay for the incentive program, an approach called conditional cash transfers that have had success in other countries.

The effort to teach the poor about financial management would operate out of the Department of Consumer Affairs and be called the Office of Financial Empowerment. Jonathan Mintz, the consumer affairs commissioner, said that he was looking to help coordinate and promote a program of individual development accounts that would use public and private money to match accumulated savings.

Policy experts called the Bloomberg plan significant and unusual. "The amount of money allocated is not trivial, especially if the money is used to leverage other expenditures, say by private businesses or nonprofits," said Harry J. Holzer, a public policy professor at [Georgetown University](#). "The whole idea of a broad fund to fund innovation seems pretty novel, especially at the city level."

Antipoverty advocates offered measured praise for the announcement, saying that while they were pleased that the city was making a financial commitment, more work remained to be done.

"It is good that the mayor is making a financial commitment to fighting poverty, but we are concerned that this process is not transparent," said Gloria Walker, a member of Community Voices Heard, an antipoverty group that advised the panel. "Low-income people need to be involved in monitoring and overseeing these new programs."

Joel Berg, executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, said that although he was "extraordinarily pleased" that the \$150 million would go to test innovative approaches, particularly the individual development accounts, he warned that it was not nearly enough.

"It equals only about \$125 per person for the approximately 1.8 million New Yorkers living below the meager federal poverty line," he said.

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## Flint Generals to help needy kids, families

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

### FLINT

#### THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

#### JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

FLINT - Twenty members of the Flint Generals hockey team will distribute toys, food and clothing to the needy Wednesday at the Salvation Army office, 211 W. Kearsley St.

The hockey players will be at the Salvation Army toy shop 12:30-4:30 p.m. to help parents choose clothing and toys for children for Christmas. They will also distribute food boxes with all the items needed to prepare a holiday meal.

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## Benefit concert helps needy

Paul Miles, The Tones (above) and Jeff Maylin will perform at a classic rock and blues benefit concert for the Give-A-Christmas Year Around fund from 7-10 p.m. Wednesday at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, in Royal Oak. Admission is a minimum \$5 donation for the 18-over event. One hundred percent of donations go to local charities through the Give-A-Christmas Year Around Fund administered by the Daily Tribune. Charities include the Judson Center, HAVEN, Troy People Concerned, South Oakland Shelter, Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency, Boys & Girls Club of South Oakland County, South Oakland YMCA, Common Ground Sanctuary, the YWCA, Gateway Counseling and the Salvation Army.

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